



AOT in Action

TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from the Director:

Good morning.

For those of you who are expecting to host friends and family during the Thanksgiving holiday, you won't run low on entertainment options as long as they are coming to Arizona! In between making the stuffing for the turkey and finding the perfect gift, encourage your visitors to get out and discover the culture, heritage and scenery of our amazing state.

If *you* are the one doing the traveling this year, plan a little extra time in your journey to find out why millions of visitors love the Grand Canyon State.

For a complete calendar of what to see and do throughout the entire state for this festive time of year, check out www.ArizonaGuide.com.

Enjoy the holiday!

Have a great week.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margie A. Emmermann". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Margie A. Emmermann
Director
Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News Flash

Complimentary ATU Workshop Set for December

The Arizona Office of Tourism is proud to present Arizona Tourism University's complimentary workshop, "**Leveraging and Linking Grant Funds.**"

This workshop is a guide to writing successful grant applications and effectively managing the grant process. Experts will provide insight into funding, application and review procedures, as well as general tips on preparing competitive proposals. Information will also be provided on a variety of grant funding and support sources.

To register for these complimentary workshops, please contact Meghan Dorn at mdorn@azot.gov or 602-364-3708.

The "**Leveraging and Linking Grant Funds**" Workshops will be held from **9 a.m. to Noon** in the following locations:

Tuesday, December 9

[Globe-Miami Regional Chamber of Commerce](#)

1360 North Broad Street
Globe, AZ 85501

Thursday, December 11

[La Posada Hotel](#)

303 E. 2nd Street (Route 66)
Winslow, AZ 86047

Neither of these dates work with your schedule? Then take advantage of our new online opportunity!

This year, AOT is proud to introduce **ATU On-Line**. We will be offering all of our workshops over the Internet in the form of a Webinar. These condensed versions will offer the same great information as the workshops.

The online class is from 1 to 4 p.m. on **Friday, December 12 from**. To register for the class contact Meghan Dorn at mdorn@azot.gov.

New Updates to AOT's Research Section!

The following items have been updated in the Research and Statistics section of AOT's business-to-business Web site www.azot.gov.

- [National Park Visitation August 2008](#)

For additional information or questions, please contact Beth Billings, Research Specialist, at 602-364-3689 or via e-mail at bbillings@azot.gov.

Trippin' with AOT

Arizona Enjoys Statewide Exposure in London Show

Arizona was very well represented recently during World Travel Market in London. World Travel Market is the premier global event for the travel industry and the largest travel trade show in the United Kingdom. The event, held November 11-14, showcased vacation destinations from around the world and attracted travel professionals and media from all over the UK and Europe. In addition to the AOT staff, the Arizona delegation consisted of the Greater Phoenix Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB), Scottsdale CVB, Tucson CVB, Flagstaff CVB, Maverick Aviation Group, Ranches of Southern Arizona, Hospitality Suite Resort, Arizona Biltmore Resort & Spa, and Best Western Grand Canyon Squire Inn. During the four-day event, appointments were held with nearly 50 tour operators and travel journalists to review their current destinations and to look at ways to expand their Arizona product information. For additional information or a copy of the World Travel Market Lead report contact Loretta Belonio at 602-364-3725 or via e-mail at lbelonio@azot.gov.

National Tour Association Annual Convention held in “Green” Pittsburgh

Jennifer Sutcliffe, AOT’s Travel Industry Marketing Manager, attended the National Tour Association (NTA) Annual Convention and Marketplace held in Pittsburgh, PA, November 15-19, 2008. The Annual event is the largest marketplace for North American packaged travel companies to meet with North American and international travel suppliers. This year was the first, much anticipated “green” convention with new green practices in place that will continue at subsequent NTA events. An estimated 2,000 delegates attended, and nearly 40 of those were Arizona suppliers and DMOs.

The overall feeling at NTA this year was positive despite the economy. Some companies said they had the best year ever and future bookings are strong and without any cancelled departures. Some companies are experiencing a flat year, but better than they expected and they are happy numbers are not down.

Jennifer completed 45, seven-minute, pre-scheduled appointments with tour companies and assisted with specific Arizona product requests as well as general information. For many, tours including Arizona are still among the most popular, but they want to add new ideas and activities in their current program including adding days and nights with new options and experiences included. New itineraries are frequently requested with new/unique activities and events as well as more requests for special interest programs and “experiences.” Check back soon for a full Arizona report of the NTA Convention. For more information, contact Jennifer Sutcliffe at 602-364-3693 or via e-mail at jsutcliffe@azot.gov.

Industry News

Economic Downturn Makes Travelers Savvier Than Ever

A new survey of more than 900 American Express travel agents suggests that travelers this holiday season are savvier than ever before, fulfilling their vacation plans in the midst of the current economic downturn by finding smart ways to save. Consumers are stretching their vacation budgets, seeking value in every aspect of their travel plans and cutting costs wherever they can through measures such as redeeming reward points to offset costs, taking shorter trips, visiting alternative destinations, staying closer to home and choosing less expensive hotels.

Seventy-seven percent of agents said vacationers are looking for more value or bargains than in the past, while 86 percent of agents reported that their customers are looking for "smart luxury" options, defined as unique travel experiences and special treatment for less. Travel agents named

New York City the most popular domestic destination this year. Top warm weather "sun and fun" destinations include Miami/Fort Lauderdale and Hawaii. (www.TravelPulse.com, 11/14)

Industry Hopes New Visa Waiver Countries Will Help Boost Travel

Amid the downturn in global tourism, a new U.S. travel rule is triggering optimism in the industry for more inbound visitors from several countries. The federal government will expand the Visa Waiver Program today to include South Korea and six Eastern European countries-- Hungary, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Slovak Republic. It allows citizens of these countries to enter the U.S. for up to three months without obtaining a visa. They join 27 developed countries, including the U.K., France and Japan that have been granted the privilege.

U.S. tourism officials have been vigorously lobbying for expansion in recent years as a means to generate more visitors and ease concerns that the U.S. hasn't been as welcoming following 9/11. "The Visa Waiver Program is the most critical program for international tourism in the U.S.," says Geoff Freeman, a public affairs executive at the Travel Industry Association. "It's valuable on all sides of travel--from business travel to tourism and student travel." (*Page 5B, USA Today*)

ESTA Tool Kit Now Available

On January 12, 2009, the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) will be mandatory for all visitors from Visa Waiver Program (VWP) countries traveling to or through the United State via sea or air. ESTA gathers biographic information from nationals of the 34 VWP countries traveling to the U.S. in advance of their visit.

Spread the word about ESTA. Review the information below and share it with as many others as possible:

- [ESTA Overview](#)
- [Talking Points](#) to help you and your representatives explain the program
- [Q & A](#) to provide greater detail on the program and its importance
- [PowerPoint](#) showing the ESTA experience for users
- Travelers should visit <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/> to complete the application.

Travel Experts Advise Get Passport Now

Travel experts are advising travelers to beat the rush and apply for their U.S. passport now if they plan to travel out of the country in the next year. There could be a surge of passport applicants in winter and spring, thanks to a new U.S. law. As of June 1, 2009, all travelers returning to the U.S. from Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Bermuda--including those who go by land or sea--must have a passport or other federally approved ID. (A passport already is required for all international air travel.) Unlike now, the new law means adult Americans won't be able to use just a driver's license and birth certificate ID when driving across the U.S.-Canadian border. From now until the end of the year traditionally is when the fewest Americans apply for passports, said Trip Atkins, assistant regional director of the Seattle Passport Agency, adding that it should take only a few weeks at this time of year. (www.ChicagoTribune.com/Travel, Sun.)

International Visitation to U.S. Increases through August

According to [Travel Agent](#), the United States experienced a 9 percent increase in international visitors during the first eight months of the year when compared to the same period in 2007. The U.S. Department of Commerce announced that 34.9 million international visitors traveled to the country from January to August, and spent \$96.3 billion during the period. The 5.6 million visitors in August alone was an increase of 6 percent when compared to August of 2007, and they

spent a record \$12.7 billion— an increase of 20 percent. The greatest increase in international travelers came from Russia, with the number increasing by 28 percent over the first eight months of 2008. Western Europe followed with an 18 percent increase, Africa with a 17 percent increase, Eastern Europe with an increase in 15 percent, and both South America and Canada with an increase of 14 percent. Arrivals from the Middle East increased by 9 percent while visitors from Australia increased by 6 percent, Central American travelers increased by 2 percent and travelers from Asia increased by 1 percent. Visitation from the Caribbean decreased 8 percent during the 8 month period while the number of travelers from Mexico decreased 7 percent.

Money Spent Traveling is Small Price to Pay to be with Loved Ones Over Holidays

Despite current economic challenges, 60 percent of people who will travel during the holidays strongly feel the time and money spent is a small price to pay to be with people they love, it was revealed in a unique survey quantifying why people take trips during the holidays.

Respondents to the Harris Interactive survey of 2,256 adults conducted last week for the Travel Industry Association credited four reasons as significant and valuable for hitting the road to visit family or friends at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

They are:

- creating memories
- maintaining traditions
- reconnecting and building relationships
- improving a person's sense of overall well-being.

Click [here](#) for a summary of the topline survey results. For more information, visit www.tia.org.

Industry to Meet on Economic Crisis

The National Tour Association is spearheading a meeting of 30 travel and tourism organizations to discuss the economic crisis. The meeting will take place in Washington D.C., on Dec. 16. The intent of the Dec. 16 meeting, according to NTA, is to share ideas and prepare recommendations for President-elect Barack Obama about how travel and tourism can help the economy. Steve Richer, NTA's public affairs advocate, said the NTA and cooperating organizations have identified "an excellent point of contact" within Obama's transition team that will help the travel and tourism industry's voice be heard. The outcome of the meeting will be presented to Obama, his transition team and key members of Congress, according to NTA. The meeting's results will be made public on Dec. 17. Other organizations attending the Dec. 16 meeting include the ASTA, the U.S. Tour Operators Association, the American Bus Association, the Cruise Lines International Association and the International Air Transport Association. The Travel Industry Association has not confirmed its attendance but told the NTA it would submit policy recommendations. (www.TravelWeekly.com, 11/19)